



# FACT SHEET

## Module 16

## Strategies for Emergencies Vehicle Malfunctions

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### Vehicle Dashboard Functions

It is essential to know what the warning lights and gauges on the instrument panel mean and where they are located. Become familiar with the vehicle's warning lights and gauges by reading the owner's manual; this will help prevent being caught off-guard should a problem arise.

### Oil Pressure Loss

Driving with extremely low oil level or with low oil pressure warning lamp on may cause serious engine damage. If the oil pressure gauge indicates extremely low oil pressure, have your engine inspected immediately.

- If the oil pressure warning light comes on and stays on, pull off the road immediately and shut off the engine.
- Driving any further can significantly increase the extent of any engine damage.
- Prevent this problem by checking the engine oil frequently—check the owner's manual for recommended oil changes and checks.

### Accelerator Failure

Accelerator failure could be caused by either a broken spring or the pedal getting stuck in the down position. In either case follow these steps:

- shift to Neutral (the engine may race but no harm done),
- search for an escape path,
- steer smoothly and brake gently,
- pull off the roadway,
- turn off the vehicle, and
- have the pedal repaired at a service center before driving again.

### Engine Failure

Engine failure could happen when the engine quits running completely, becomes flooded, or overheats. If the engine just shuts off while driving:

- shift to Neutral,
- look for an escape path,
- DO NOT BRAKE hard,
- pull off the roadway (brake gently but with more pressure on the pedal),
- stop; try to restart the engine,
- if unsuccessful, raise hood and turn on emergency flashers, and
- wait for help.

### The Engine Overheats While Driving

- If the air conditioner is on, turn it off.
- Turn on the heater to draw heat off the engine.
- If stopped, shift to "Neutral" and press the accelerator pedal gently.
- If these fail, move to a safe location off the roadway.
- Do not open the radiator cap, and/or
- Seek help.

### Good Steering Wheel Maintenance

- Avoid turning the steering wheel when the vehicle is not moving; this causes wear on the steering system.
- Never force the steering to the limit of travel; back off slightly and the wheels will still be fully turned.
- Avoid deep potholes, curbs, and any other sudden or hard impacts that may cause damage to the steering components and tires.
- Have the steering aligned at least once a year and after any serious impacts.
- Periodically inspect the belt at the power steering pump and check power steering fluid. (Consult the owner's manual for exact locations.)
- Steering problems often develop gradually rather than suddenly.
- Any steering problem is serious and should be repaired immediately.

### Total Steering Failure—A Serious Emergency

- Communicate to others by using the horn and emergency flashers.
- Stop as quickly as possible using the parking brake. DO NOT depress the brake pedal as the vehicle could swerve sharply.
- Shift to a lower gear.
- Call for assistance.

### The Car Catches on Fire

- Steer the vehicle out of traffic and away from buildings and people.
- Everyone must leave the vehicle immediately and move away.
- If the engine is on fire, do not open the hood, call the fire department.
- If the passenger compartment is on fire, use a fire extinguisher, or call the fire department.

### Brake Failure

Total brake failure rarely happens on newer vehicles. The warning light will usually light up if there is a malfunction. If it does occur on a vehicle without ABS, it usually occurs when the driver is braking for a stop.

#### Try this first:

- Pump the brake pedal quickly.
- After three or four pumps the driver will know if the brakes are going to hold.
- This action may build up enough brake pressure to steer the vehicle off the highway and stop safely.

#### If the above action doesn't work, try this action:

- Downshift to a lower gear and let braking power of the engine slow the vehicle.
- Find an escape route—a safe exit from the highway.
- Activate the hazard lights to warn other drivers of a problem.
- Apply the parking brake gradually—quickly release the parking brake if the vehicle begins to skid, and reapply as needed.
- Select a safe path while the vehicle slows down.